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## LIQUIDATING OUR WAR ILLUSIONS

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### I. THE RISE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN WAR MORALE

Previous to the French Revolution, public opinion did not play a very important rôle in war. Professional armies were the rule, and morale in their ranks was hardly a matter of civilian concern. The French Revolutionary leaders discovered the *levée en masse* as a formidable military instrument. By the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, the idea of "the nation in arms" was pretty well established in both France and Germany, though nearly a century was to elapse before practically every nation in Europe was organized into a war machine, down to the last person and the last wheel of industry. With the whole nation involved in war, public morale became one of the most intimate concerns of governments.

The industrial revolution made literacy an economic asset, and illiteracy practically disappeared from the highly industrialized districts of the world. Working class people collected in towns, at work which threw them more and more into conscious groups demanding opportunity, education and a voice in affairs. Railway and steamboat building, improved mail service and the telegraph integrated nations and bound the world together with a web of trade. Finally the telephone, the cable, the radio outfit and the daily newspaper made the world's happenings common property almost instantaneously. In this way the tribal spirit was given a national scope. The narrowness of local provincialism was transferred to an entire country. With the standardization of news identical or similar stimuli reached millions of citizens in every country. Further, rapid communication

over a world wide area served to make all conscious of any real or alleged affronts offered to the citizen of any country in the most remote region of the world. In 1800, the insulting of an American in Timbuctoo would have remained unknown to the State Department for months and probably forever to the mass of the citizens; in 1900, it would have inflamed American opinion in every class of citizens in twenty-four hours.

Public opinion helped form the policies of governments as early as the twenties of the last century, when Lord Byron and others inflamed Europe over the Greek war of independence. William Howard Russell of the London *Times* immortalized himself as the correspondent of the Crimean War thirty years later. Learning of government blunders and the sufferings of soldiers, the English public turned out a ministry. Florence Nightingale's attempt to reorganize the scandalously inefficient hospital service provoked the famous remark of the French General Bosquet: "*C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre.*" Public opinion in England sided with her—the conduct of war had ceased to be the exclusive province of generals.

The same Russell was in America at the outbreak and during the first year of our Civil War. His dispatches form one of the best war books ever written. The circumstances of his departure form a commentary on the tremendous importance public opinion had achieved by 1862. There being no cable in operation, it took a month for his account of the battle of Bull Run to cross the ocean twice and reach this country in print. Fair as it looks now, it did such violence to the Northern illusions at the time that the writer was dubbed "Bull Run Russell" and practically hounded out of the country.

From that time forward, since declarations of war must be at least nominally concurred in by the public and the actual hostilities carried on by whole nations, governments seriously grappled with the problem of mobilizing and galvanizing public opinion. For instance, it was carefully done by both sides in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. The natural device, which has never been improved upon except

in detail of execution, is to create a one-sided "epic" of the war, force this version upon practically the entire public by reiterated suggestion, and silence serious critics by threats or imprisonment. Added complication of this task of propaganda is lent by the importance of gaining and holding neutral sympathy.

## II. THE GENERATION OF THE DUALISTIC WARTIME EPIC IN 1914

The material facts about the outbreak of the war seem to be: That both England and Germany tried to prevent a general war at the end of July, 1914, but were checkmated by the Russian general mobilization, which inevitably produced the great war because of secret treaties and military conventions known to the parliaments of *none* of the countries involved. This takes us back to the merits of the Austro-Russian quarrel which precipitated the war. The South-Slav activities against the integrity of Austria-Hungary, especially from 1908-14, were known to and backed by the Tsar's government. They involved France and England through the secret treaties and conventions, just as the opposing activities of the Dual Monarchy involved another set of secret alliances and conventions. This pivotal question of Austro-Serbian relations between 1908 and 1914 has recently received a good deal of attention; but the candid historian must suspect that there is yet a good deal which the diplomats have not revealed.

So great is the hysteria at the outbreak of a war that the various publics involved will swallow myths of the cheapest melodramatic type. Recognition of the importance of fear in war psychology is seen in the stress laid by both sides upon proofs that the enemy is the aggressor and that one's country is in imminent danger of invasion. Each side attacks the other's epic on points of fact, but these assaults are for home and neutral consumption, since no candid weighing of the evidence is tolerated in either warring camp.

Let us attempt a brief historical analysis of the allied war epic of 1914-18, the one best known to the American reader. It can surely do no harm now, since the story has fully

served its purpose of carrying public morale through to victory. The Central Powers, according to this Allied version of the war, had long premeditated an assault upon their neighbors, with nothing less than world dominion in view. Seizing upon the occasion of an assassinated archduke, the German Kaiser called a secret meeting in Potsdam in July, 1914, at which it was decided to force a war upon the peace-loving and unprepared Entente powers—France, Russia and England. This Entente or “cordial understanding” was purely defensive, whereas the Triple Alliance of central Europe deliberately forged an aggressive war. France, and especially England, tried desperately to settle the dispute peaceably, but Austria, backed and egged on by Germany, followed impossible demands upon Serbia by an armed invasion. Even though Russia had begun mobilizing in the south (only), a general European conflict might have been avoided had not Germany broken off negotiations, mobilized her whole army and attacked France through Belgium, a country whose neutrality all nations were under peculiarly sacred obligations not to violate. This act outraged the sensibilities of England, and incidentally made her uneasy for France’s safety and for her own, so that she was drawn into the conflict. She was in honor bound to intervene. Germany treated her sacred covenants as mere scraps of paper in entering Belgium, since she had signed the 1839 treaty. Moreover, her soldiers behaved in such a manner as to place the German nation beyond the pale of civilization. They swept through the country like Huns, wantonly raping and burning, cutting off children’s hands and crucifying prisoners.

According to the German war epic, on the contrary, the Triple Alliance had always been for strictly defensive purposes. In the case of Rumania, its tentative fourth member it was merely personal between the rulers, the parliaments never having even ratified it. The Triple Entente, however, which had slowly grown since 1892 was of a very different character. Russia had been scheming with Serbia since 1908 to dissolve the Austro-Hungarian Empire. France backed Russia in the hope of getting Alsace and Lorraine,

provinces which she had wrenched from the German states in the 17th century and lost in the 19th. England was in the coalition because of jealousy of the increasing menace of German trade rivalry, because German East Africa cut her Cape-to-Cairo railway in two, because German Southwest Africa was threatening her diamond monopoly, and out of jealousy of the German rôle in the development of Turkey. Thoroughly laid plans of England and France included the use of supposedly neutral Belgium as a military base against Germany, with the collusion of the Belgian government. France and her allies had even attempted to sap Germany's defensive strength by a secret agreement with Italy behind her back. When the trap was ready to be sprung, the Austrian Archduke was murdered with obvious connivance on the part of Serbia, and Jaurès, the one Frenchman who seriously threatened to expose and foil the plot, was likewise assassinated. Russia was the first great nation to decree a general mobilization, but kept the fact secret—so that Germany would be obliged to mobilize in self-defence, but England and France could throw dust in neutral eyes and pose as coming in on the defensive. This in spite of the fact that the Russian mobilization involved the French and the French the English! Belgium, secretly one of the aggressive group, had to be treated sternly because her citizens put themselves beyond the pale of civilization by sniping, pouring boiling liquids on captured Germans and other nameless atrocities. France brought into Europe black African savages, thus making herself responsible for horrible methods of warfare such as had not been tolerated in western Europe for centuries. Moreover, the French had begun the war on the western front by aerial attacks, just as the Russians had begun it on the eastern by the first general mobilization. England starved German women and children by a flagrantly illegal high-seas blockade. Hardest of all to endure, the group of allied nations which had cunningly planned all this ruin were hypocritically attempting to lay the blame for it at the door of the intended victims. Such was the German version.

Both epics were mixtures of truth and falsehood. Neither side experienced much difficulty in inoculating its own public opinion with its version. In the opening months of the struggle civilians and soldiers thought remarkably alike; but before many months had passed a large and growing body of soldiers, men who had been exposed to death on the battlefield until they had gotten used to it, began to separate from the conventional body of public opinion in the rear. This sharp cleavage between the psychology of the front and the psychology of the rear marked the beginning of war disillusionment.

### III. THE DEVELOPMENT AND MECHANISMS OF WARTIME PROPAGANDA

In the meantime the governments involved were employing all their resources of ingenuity to convert neutrals to their respective war epics. Their propaganda to their own people was not quite the same as it would have been if it had not been designed to fit neutral opinion as well.

Germany made one colossal blunder. It was sound finance to pay for her war as she went along, but it was disastrous diplomacy. If Germany had sold big issues of war bonds in the western hemispheres, the questions of high-seas blockade and arbitrary allied definitions of contraband would have been dealt with very differently. The Americas would have had a direct incentive to listen to both epics impartially, to insist on both sides staying within international legality. Surely no properly informed, reflective person of any nationality can doubt that the unrestricted submarine warfare and the complete shutting off from central Europe of all kinds of goods from across the sea were balancing aspects of the same flagrant situation. Further, the Germans were pathetically naïve in the openness with which they expressed their aims as regards annexations and indemnities, in the event of a German victory. While the allied countries kept their secret treaties so well hidden that President Wilson did not know of their existence when he left America for the peace conference and that they made good news for the *New York Times* as late as March 5, 1922, the Germans were easily

and rapidly convicted of aggressive ambitions "out of their own mouths."

The question of responsibility for the original aggression may be postponed for the time being, since each side firmly believed its own version and this issue had comparatively little practical effect at the outset on relations with neutrals. Each party firmly believed, and not without foundation, that the other had systematic and well-laid plans for the occupation of Belgium. When it became certain that a struggle between central Europe and a French-Russian combination was an impending fact, no one in his senses doubted that the initial shock would be on the western front—least of all the military staffs in both camps, who had looked forward to just this event for years. The key industries of France and Germany—especially the latter—are too near the frontier to risk any other manoeuvre. The same roughly applies to Belgium. Two of her land frontiers were too near the heart of the industrial districts of France and Germany respectively for any risk to be intentionally taken—to say nothing of her sea frontier and England.

Early in the war, the psychological interest centers on a very primitive aspect of the heroic-epics. This is a slightly defined modern version of the conception of the naked savage—"the people" (his tribal group), *vs.* "the others" or "the enemy." In 1914, the war was conceived as a melodrama, the two sides playing the respective rôles of hero and villain. This myth of a fundamental difference between two kinds of people engaged was created and kept alive by a curious substitution of abstract for concrete ideas which I have not seen set down in simple language, and will therefore explain as follows: Modern armies, being cross-sections of the nations they represent, are made up of good, bad and indifferent men. The bad men, stimulated and given opportunity by the circumstances of war, commit some crimes, such as pillage, rape and incendiarism. This is peculiarly applicable to an army swiftly advancing through foreign territory, but the statement will probably pass without question that some of these crimes occurred in every army mobilized between 1914 and 1918. But the war epics are



in melodramatic form—the nations are viewed as *persons* in the action. This attitude is sedulously cultivated by the governments and is highly effective for propagandist purposes. To a Frenchman, “Germany” is an abstraction, not a group of individual people, good, bad and indifferent. This Frenchman does not think concretely of Fritz Kreisler whom he knows to be a good man, or the unknown Hans Schmidt, a blacksmith in St. Goar with a wife and three children. If Kurt Schwartz, a drunken dragoon, commits rape, then it is the abstract *Germany* which has committed rape. If a half-dozen well-authenticated murders and other crimes can be collected, the abstract enemy is demonstrated to be a villain of the deepest dye. A probable story is as good for purposes of propaganda and morale as a true one.

As the sources of the fury-generating ideas, they seem to be chiefly: (1) Old wars and tradition—there is little need to invent new tales, inasmuch as nearly all the best ones have been told over and over of previous struggles, read over and over by the people they are expected to affect; (2) Actual credible tales about the current war, industriously gathered by the “intelligence sections” and fitted into the popular myth with greater or less skill by the organized agencies for propaganda.

Of the first of these, the myth of the crucified Canadian in the recent war is a good example. The intelligence sections tried in vain to verify it, but of course kept still about their failure. It was doubtless suggested by the literature of previous wars in which such things actually occurred. Another example of this hackneyed type of war myth is the cutting off by enemy soldiers of children’s hands, or women’s breasts. No such case was established in the western arena of the recent war—by established is meant proved beyond a reasonable doubt. Two of these cases came under the writer’s personal observation, and may be instructive as to the possible origin of the tales. The first was a French refugee child returning home by way of Switzerland. The story was that a soldier had reached him to a limb some ten feet from the ground and left him hanging by his hands until his grip loosened and he fell, breaking his back.

Numerous refugees repeated the story, but none of them had personally seen the occurrence. The only evidence was that the child obviously had something wrong with his back. The other case was two Rumanian children, minus their hands. This was quite realistic enough to convince war-hypnotized people, but an inquiry at the hospital where they were first treated yielded the information that a hand-grenade, picked up on an old battlefield where they were playing, had exploded and so maimed the members that they had to be amputated.

The second class of war-myth is still more realistic and dangerous because founded on fact. It is the case previously suggested, where an isolated case of actual crime is accepted as typical of the conduct of millions of people. This is the well-known logical fallacy of mistaking part for the whole. For example, it would not be fair to judge all the conduct of the whole American army in the war by the fact that the very first German prisoner taken by American soldiers was stabbed to death after he had surrendered. Such abstractions are made in the rear and are readily adopted by civilians, near the propaganda factories and far from any individual enemies. Very likely this is the key to the relative humanity and reasonableness of the fighting soldier as compared to the ferocious psychology of the safe rear. The fighter, in daily contact with the enemy, is obliged to see a group of individuals much like himself, and has difficulty in conjuring up the abstraction. He finds the enemy soldier brave and resourceful. Talking with or watching prisoners, he sees human beings, whose reactions to hardship and danger he can enter into completely. He can hardly remain blind to the fact that their discipline, like his, forces them to kill or be killed. Indeed, he often feels more kinship with them than with his own fury-saturated civilians at home whose blind hate, costing them nothing and him everything, he often resents or holds in contempt. Prevention of fraternizing has been a very hard problem in discipline, the soldiers have so much in common and so little to separate them except barbed wire and civilian frenzy.

#### IV. THE GRADUAL DISINTEGRATION OF THE WAR ILLUSION

The first shock of war tends to crystallize public opinion, but sustained hostilities gradually disintegrate it again, from the front rearwards. War is in a vague way analogous to college: it offers a tangible aim in time and space as a substitute for the intangible goals of life and civilization. This makes possible an extraordinary concentration of resources and attention, but makes for an artificial attitude of mind. At the outbreak of war, there is a certain breaking-down of class and caste—all rush to take part in the heroic adventure. Victory will come quickly—this is one of the perennial illusions. This melodramatic attitude soon passes and the ordinary motives and habits reassert themselves. Barbusse voiced a common belief of common soldiers when he affirmed that war very soon degenerates into an overdone tragedy, with workers and peasants killing each other for reasons they cannot fathom. The caste lines are gradually redrawn, the lower classes getting the bulk of the dirty work. The soldiers may draw cartoons, crack jokes or edit funny papers to take their minds off the hardships, boredom and apprehension, but that is not what is at the bottom of their minds, as Siegfried Sassoon has set down in immortal verse. In 1915 and 1916, the war was a personal matter out there, though in the rear is still remained abstract. With the veteran hate had become largely perfunctory or entirely absent—the thing which nerved him to drive his bayonet home was the hope that the thrust brought peace nearer.

Hate is drunken, and living by the month in the shadow of death is conducive to a certain inward sobriety. There is—to put it mildly—a certain irresponsibility about the mob-madness of the safe civilian, a certain lack of human dignity which might make such an individual blush ten years after, if he could get a correct reproduction of his own emotions at the earlier period. Of course, he rarely does. It is among the well-known universal illusions of man that he always believed what he has later discovered to be true.

By 1917, Europe was about ready to call it a stalemate—the universal desire of the soldier to see it ended before he was killed had penetrated to the rear. Bereavement was so common that it had ceased to be a social distinction. Paul Gerdely has done a fine bit of literary analysis in *La Guerre, Madame*. The soldier starts on his leave meaning to tell those complacent people back there what a horrible, intolerable mistake it all is from his point of view. Paris friends conventionalize him into a hero—thrust upon him the part he is supposed to play. In a stinking box-car with thirty-nine of his fellows, bound for the front, he suddenly realizes that his leave is ended and that he has not said a word of what was on his mind. So he goes out and dies. “Tomorrow we attack,” said a French soldier to the writer in 1917. “Two miles gained, perhaps, and ten thousand men shot to pieces. . . . How far do you think it is from here to Germany, my old one?” Sometimes they mutinied—failed to advance when the order came.

When the disillusionment was just creeping back from front to rear, with the psychology of peace in the offing, America entered the war. So the French soldier had to do another year and a half, now that the rear saw a chance to win after all. But American aid came slowly, and most of it seemed to be cluttering up the rear. The Frenchman had to spend another awful winter in the slimy ditches before he saw Americans in the fighting lines in such numbers as to promise real support. Russia had collapsed. The Caporetto disaster in Italy dispensed gloom. French soldiers fumed at the thought of the hordes of young Americans back in their towns. They were jealous—jealous not only because of their women, but likewise of the better rations and quarters, of the comparative immunity from danger of those foreigners back there.

In the spring of 1918, hopelessness and bitterness had again penetrated to the rear. It was all over France. In the street in front of a house with many people in hearing distance, I heard a woman tell bitterly of the death of the third and last son of her neighbor. It was just after the disaster of the *Chemin des Dames*—the second since winter—

and the Germans were still advancing. "My God," she shouted, "are they going to keep it up until all the Frenchmen are dead?" Young Americans who had not yet been under fire sometimes expressed a thirst for carnage, but trainloads of Frenchmen came back shouting "Down with Clemenceau" and "End the War." Many American officers about headquarters have doubtless forgotten by this time what they thought and said then. The French had a way of saying: "We appreciate your help—but you came too late."

The war was still a gamble that last spring, and not a few high allied officers thought the odds were with the Germans. The situation was thoroughly out of control. Then, through Foch's skill and our luck, German mistakes and ill luck, the tide of victory suddenly turned in our direction. Both sides had been gambling with their very existence. Ludendorff admits this, but the allied commanders can well afford to park their reputations securely behind a *fait accompli*.

Armistice day was more of a thrill than a surprise. The German line in France had given way, and the enemy had suffered irreparable losses in material and men. Let us not forget, however, that the allied armies had sustained terrific losses too, that in the rapid pursuit our lines of communication were in hopeless confusion in many places, and many units absolutely required rest and reforming. Operations could not have continued many more days without a halt and a reorganization. But that meant giving the enemy a chance to finish organizing his new line of defense. In the fall this might well mean another winter in the trenches and a spring campaign in which the Germans had not a ghost of a show of victory. All Europe seemed on the verge of economic and moral collapse, and neither side felt like risking universal ruin when the final result could not be in doubt. The political revolution in Germany and the attitude of the new government made it morally compulsory for the allies to sign an armistice on the basis of President Wilson's published program for a peace of reconciliation. To repudiate that program meant to sacrifice neutral opinion and sow disaffection among the moderates at home.

"Victory—it is victory," the French captain who lunched with me on the great day kept saying. "Who would have thought it a few months ago—who would have dared hope for so much?"

In a few moments, we had a demonstration of one of the permanent illusions of peoples. It was a hospital town, and presently we were joined by two or three Americans, including a lady doctor in Red Cross uniform. "At least I am glad," said the Frenchman, as though speaking to himself, "that our troops did not get into Germany."

"Why?" asked the lady doctor.

"There are always some things to be regretted when an army invades an enemy's country. We should be glad that Frenchmen do not have to answer for them this time," he said. Then: "It was so even in your Civil War, was it not?"

It developed that he was very familiar with the acrid controversy over the accusations against one of Sherman's divisions, and the burning of a certain South Carolina city. Upon the writer's admission that such charges had been made, and that of course it was possible that there was some truth back of them, the lady doctor fairly gasped. "It is not true," she almost shouted. . . . "I will not sit here and hear my country . . . belied!" The Frenchman adroitly changed the subject.

Except possibly some American and other troops who had not been long engaged, the war illusions of the fighting armies were pretty well liquidated at the end of 1918. Some had vanished years earlier, and there were plenty of soldiers in the universal-compulsory-service French army who had never had any. One of them was on his way to the trenches just in front of Esne, Verdun sector, in July 1917, without any gun, so the writer, then an ambulance driver, gave him a lift. In his pockets the soldier carried a number of small books—among them Pascal's *Pensées*. Questioned about his gun, he said:

"I have no gun. I shall pick up a discarded one at Esne." Upon the protest that it might be stopped with rust, he smiled: "But I do not want to shoot with it. I have never killed anybody, and do not wish to. I am a

philosophic anarchist; but these silly governments force us all to make at least a pretense of murder."

Another, a sergeant, doing the best he could at his distasteful task nevertheless, remarked with a shrug: "Enemy? What enemy? All the peoples are good, but all the governments are scoundrels." The real hate reservoir—the last to be emptied—is the civilian population.

It will occur to the reader that the public was not quite uniformly illusioned—the inoculations with war myths did not all "take" with equal virulence. At first no opposition is tolerated. Immunity to the melodramatic epic is enough to put one under suspicion. The slightest active symptoms of the "disease" of reason, to ward off which the "dope" has been concocted, is likely to bring ostracism or prison. There are many people of a calmer turn of mind, however, who are sane enough not to get the general frenzy but at the same time practical enough to realize the futility of trying to stem it at once. They are inconspicuous for a time and may appear to be drifting, but many are really taking soundings and testing the current. The disillusioned fighter is not as completely without sympathy in the hypnotized mob to his rear as he thinks.

This takes us back to the larger aspects of the war epic which we passed over temporarily in order to glance at the more personal items which the soldier learns to write off by himself, by virtue of his situation. High emotional tension tends to relax as time goes by, even in the rear. Normal human motives begin to reassert themselves. The psychology of bargaining slowly seeps back. A tendency appears for the astute and privileged to find the places where prestige and remuneration are to be had for the most economical outlay of effort and risk. By 1917, even proven heroes of three years' standing were succumbing to the temptation of easier, safer or more comfortable posts further back. The writer knew well one French sergeant who did this after a terrific wrestling with his conscience and against the stern admonitions of his father-confessor, though a devout Catholic. The man had been repeatedly wounded and decorated. He wanted to live, and he saw the others practicing the philosophy of *sauve qui peut*.

The full effect of the Russian collapse upon the war epic was not felt at once. Late in 1917, the new Russian government released to the world startling evidence from the trials of ministers and generals of the old régime, hopelessly undermining the theory of a war hatched in a Potsdam conference and thrust upon a Russia striving for peace. The German ultimatum to Russia, which expired on August 1, 1914, did not *precede* the Russian general mobilization order, but *followed* it after nearly two days. What western European peoples had been told was a partial mobilization by Russia, in the south only, was general, which made the Tsarist government the initial aggressor among the great powers. Many of these facts were immediately put into English by H. N. Brailsford in the appendix to his *League of Nations*.

This and other papers presented to the western European public by the end of 1917 made it fairly evident to fair-minded people that the war was really made by Austria-Hungary and Russia, and that the vicious system of alliances had simply drawn in the other combatants. As we shall see, Germany's surmise that by the terms of the secret Franco-Russian alliance the Russian mobilization must inevitably be followed by the French was correct. Professor Fay's articles in the *American Historical Review* have supplied many added details, but the broad outlines of the 1914 situation were fairly apparent at the end of 1917. What did not appear until later was the further certainty that the French participation in the war thus precipitated by Austria and Russia inevitably involved England. What threw genuine consternation into European diplomatic circles was the spreading by the Russians before the world of the secret archives of the Foreign Office. Secret treaties, agreements and alliances appeared one after another, and no allied power except the United States was spared the humiliation of seeing its real motives given up to the light of day. The full sordidness of the 1915 Rome agreement, republished from Russian sources by the Manchester *Guardian* got beneath the skins of some thoughtful people who had previously given no thought to the tissue of corruption and a morality which is European diplomacy.



Eventually, the exposures from unfriendly sources of the history and nature of the Franco-Russian alliance became so alarmingly full that a French "yellow book" was brought out. This statement out of their own mouths leaves the allied war epic *spurlos versenkt*, even without the volumes of official correspondence being poured out by the Russian and German governments. The old German government is in no sense exonerated from blame—a scoundrel is not excused by the proof that there are others.

The patent fact is that there was nothing passive about the longing of the Serbian and Russian governments that the Dual Monarchy might founder. That they had long played a deliberate game for just this stake is no longer in doubt. The dissolution of Austria-Hungary could not occur without war. No more is there any question that the French foreign office knew about this game and its probable consequences. It is impossible to believe that English diplomatic circles were left in darkness. The demonstrated completeness of their long-standing plans to land soldiers on the continent against a specific enemy, Germany, acquits them of any such idiocy. In their sudden war-hysteria, even well-informed people forgot the known fact that French and Russian staff officers had repeatedly gone over the two fronts and formulated plans which could be set in motion in a few minutes. Any one who supposes that the Mediterranean-North Sea division of naval responsibility between the French and English was arrived at without any general understanding as to what responsibilities were involved is singularly innocent of how such things are done. Had it been mere coincidence, what a miraculously fortunate coincidence that the great English review concentrated ships in the North Sea in the summer of 1914! The similar tactics of the Central Powers have been gone over *ad nauseam* in the war literature. The peoples of Europe stood over a powder magazine in 1914—one deliberately accumulated for years by inner circles in the governments. These diplomatic groups, including a few trusted military chiefs, knew that the explosion was due soon, but each cunningly planned that the catastrophe should take place under circumstances which would tend to leave the other morally responsible to outward appearances.

## V. THE ALLIED EPIC AND THE PEACE

At least the foreign offices might have had a decent respect for the memory of the millions slain in the belief that they were making a repetition of this thing impossible. It was not so. The war fictions must be imposed a little while longer, until peace could be made on the hero-villian hypothesis. The necessary machinery for controlling public opinion to that end was already created. Nations had turned their consciences and sense of truth and fair play over to groups of old cynics and young zealots organized into "intelligence sections." Their custody of these departments of our souls was continued on the basis of the legal technicality that the war was not yet over. There was nothing of the frank and above-board about the methods of these people. Scientific dissimulation was a cult with them, and bulldozing the swift resort if that failed.

At the end of November, 1918, the writer was quizzed for a half hour by a beardless member of this "third section." The game—leading questions and wild assertions in the general direction of the war epic whence the quarry is suspected of wandering, all under the guise of candid conversation—was extravagantly overdone. After fruitless attempts to gain assent to his fantastic statements, the schoolboy lieutenant finally answered the repeated counter question as to what the interview was really about. A Frenchman somewhere in western France where the writer was settling war contracts had resented a perfectly amiable exception to the man's statement that he would never speak to a German again, buy any goods made by one, or speak to anybody who did. It had seemed to the bored listener to his tirade that the actual value of goods was a stronger force in the long run than emotional prejudice. Why should this create a furor after the guns were silent and our troops in victorious occupation of the enemy's territory? People simply could not get used to unstandardized opinions, nor were their governments yet ready to allow it. Being asked finally if there was any other question at issue than what the all-powerful military wanted said, the lieutenant answered, in

a sudden burst of confidence: "That's it exactly. We know what we want said and what we don't want said, and we've got the power to get what we want. It's not a question of what's true or not—that's got nothing to do with it. It's a question of force, and we've got the force." Whereupon we both laughed, conventionally expressed satisfaction that two people who understood each other so well should have met, and parted.

The next year (1919) the information and opinion lid was down just as tight upon the commissions to eastern Europe. Our letters went home *via* the State Department, and the information sections were presided over by people who knew what was wanted. Ostensibly we were there solely to feed the starving, clothe the ragged and heal the sick. One of the colonels in charge had a way of saying that he considered "fighting Bolshevism" his chief function. Whatever the colonel and his information section did not like was "Bolshevism"—by definition.

Keynes and the major prophets of disillusionment took immediate hold on the parts of Europe already suffering. Looking back upon it now, it looks as though that state of mind became general in various parts of the world about the time that general economic dislocation hit them. Our turn came in 1920. The Paris Conference was anathema with the practically unrepresented small nations long before it broke up. Neutrals were more caustically if less bitterly facetious about it than the small allies it spoke of so solicitously, in the abstract.

A glance at the personnel of allied ministries since the war suggests that foreign affairs in Europe are being managed largely by the victorious half of the same crew which worked at secret alliances and doped public opinion before and during the war. There is no use trying to graft on such poisonous roots as that. If diplomacy in the old sense cannot be abolished and public affairs transacted in broad daylight, then the world cannot be made a decent place to live in, and we would as well give up and sink. That seems to be the present verdict of thoughtful Americans, and who can criticize it? The Paris attempt was never more than half-

hearted, and it failed. Will the Washington and Genoa attempts come to a like end?

As to European diplomacy, our illusions are pretty well liquidated. Outside of a vague tendency to romance, our war illusions seem pretty well cleared out excepting one alone. It is the oldest one, and perhaps it is permanent. Our fighting forces were different. Armies may be as like as two peas, unless one of them is ours. Barbusse may write all the books he likes about French army life in its less bewitching aspects. Siegfried Sassoon's disenchanting verses we may regard with enthusiasm. Let Sir Philip Gibbs write a library on things that can now be told—about European armies. But let John Dos Passos write an imaginative little novel about three soldiers under the star-spangled banner who were bored by the life and occasionally found the officers discourteous, and what happens? We swing instantly to the mentality of a Patagonian aborigine, clothed in his narrow string and conscious superiority. It may be open-season occasionally for "the others," but we insist on clinging to some robust illusions about "the people."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bibliographical Note.*—This article is primarily a psychological interpretation of what its author presumes to be facts generally accepted by historians, rather than a résumé of the proofs for such facts. It is hardly necessary to cite such works as Barbusse's *Le Feu* (Under Fire), Sassoon's verses or Gerald's *The War*, *Madame*, available in any good library. Gibbs' *Now It Can be Told* and *More that Must be Told* are thoroughly good for the attitude of the soldier. If the civilian's memory cannot be trusted for his own attitude, he may consult the plethora of books and articles which held his attention at the time. William Howard Russell's *My Diary, North and South* (Boston, 1863) can be found in good city or university libraries, and is one of the sanest, best war books ever written. Keynes' *Economic Consequences of the Peace* marked the turning of the public mind from the mythical to the realistic phase. For general arraignments of war, the author merely suggests three of the best: Palmer's *Folly of Nations*, Irwin's *The Next War*, and Angell's *The Fruits of Victory*. Gibbs' books play this rôle as well as the one mentioned above.

The writer has not been tempted to insert any of his own slight experiences with bursting shells or his feelings about them, but has relied upon interviews with common soldiers who had faced war's realities for years. These were diligently compared as soon as possible with interviews gathered in the rear. Notebooks, carefully kept, and treasured clippings from innumerable sources are the real bibliography of this paper.

As to the later writings on the origins of the war, it is only fair to suggest some, so that the reader may know what the writer considers to be

evidence. Pevet's *Les Responsables de la Guerre* and Loreburn's *How the War Came* are worth perusal. Nock's *The Myth of the Guilty National* is described by the title. Hoeniger's *Russlands Vorbereitung zum Kriegausbruch* is too long and tedious for the ordinary reader. The appendix to Brailsford's *A League of Nations* is astonishingly explicit and satisfactory, considering that it appeared in 1917, in the heat of the conflict. He does not say so, but I fancy the Russian material may have come from a Swiss pamphlet "*Suchomlinow*," printed by Ferdinand Wyss in Bern, 1917, which is somewhat fuller. The Manchester *Guardian* published some of it in December, 1917. Professor Fay's series, "New Light on the Origins of the World War," in *American Historical Review* for 1920-21 admirably summarizes the whole question, including the dramatic myth that the war sprouted from a Potsdam conference which floated one Ambassador Morgenthau to easy fame. *International Conciliation*, issues for 1919, furnishes translations of the peace treaty and the replies of the German delegation. A good summary of the part dealing with Germany's rôle in the outbreak of the war in 1914 is gathered in the German 1919 *White-Book* entitled "Is Germany Guilty" (Eng. trans.).

The reader will do well to scan through Rohrbach's *Massenverhetzung u. Volkskrieg in Belgien* (Berlin, 1916) as an offset to the well-known Bryce report on Belgium. The German work deals ably with such questions as sniping, and is strewn with photographic reproductions of clippings from Belgian newspapers, marked and dated.

Siebert & Schreiner's *Entente Diplomacy and the World* (Knickerbocker Press, 1921) gives 760 pp. of documents and letters from the Russian Embassy in London which throw much light on the French 1918 *Yellow-Book* on the Russo-French alliance and military convention.

This French *Yellow-Book* (*Documents Diplomatiques—L'Alliance Franco-Russe*) seems to have been made necessary by the publication of the secret documents and correspondence of the Tsarist government, beginning in 1917, by the Soviets. Some of the French documents in the book are extremely interesting, as even the best historians had been kept literally guessing in the dark about the alliance. It was certainly "*rigoreusement secret*" (Doc. 82), "*au moment où les circonstances nécessiteront la mise en exécution de la présente convention*" (i.e., until a war should actually break out). How literally secret it was from even the French parliament can be appreciated only by a tedious following of the parliamentary debates, wherein repeated questions of the representatives of the French nation were met by bland subterfuges and throttled with votes of confidence. In this connection, attention is called to the reference in Document 84 to the necessity to "*rien divulguer qui ne soit absolument indispensable*," and to exercise such precautions that the "*caractère pacifique du traité*" can be insisted upon "*dans le but de bien établir vis-à-vis de l'Europe le rôle d'attaquées qu'auraient la France et la Russie, point très essentiel au moment de l'exécution*." This "very essential point" that the parties to the convention shall be able to play the rôle of the party attacked before the eyes of Europe is repeated in the vast correspondence now made public with an insistency which seems to speak for itself. Nothing is based, in this article, upon the mass of secret diplomatic correspondence now released to the public by the newer governments of Russia and Germany, though this has not been successfully contradicted, and much if it fits too nicely into unquestionable documents to have been manufactured out of whole cloth.